

Testimony in Support of: HB-5044 An Act Concerning Domesticated Horses

Testimony presented by Frederick J. Mastele, President of the Connecticut Horse Council, Chairman of the Connecticut Equine Advisory Council, and Chairman of the Durham Agriculture Commission.

Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile and members of the Environment Committee;

I submit this testimony in behalf of the organizations I represent.

There are several reasons why I feel this bill should be passed, however first and foremost is because there is currently a case before the CT Supreme Court concerning a young boy that was bitten by a horse at a farm in Milford in 2006. When originally tried in 2008 the lower court ruled in favor of the horse owner determining horses were not inherently vicious animals. There was an appeal of the case in 2010 and the Appellate Court reversed the decision ruling that horses were inherently vicious. In September of 2013 the CT Supreme Court heard arguments from both sides and are currently in deliberation with a decision pending.

If horses are determined to be inherently vicious it would have a devastating economic impact on the equine community. According to insurance experts, it will result in an increase of insurance costs and possibly make horses uninsurable. In addition, an unfavorable decision could result in legislation that could restrict the uses of horses for certain programs and activities, and how the public would need to be protected from them.

The economic decline had a major impact on the equine industry, with horses being abandoned and literally having to be given away because the owners could no longer afford keeping them. We are still in the midst of a recovery and an increase in insurance or other costs would prove to be detrimental once again. Over the past 10-15 years, due to economic issues such as the taxing of horses, higher fuel costs, increases in property taxes, etc., many horse owners left Connecticut for more horse friendly states.

Horse owners and equine related businesses provide jobs and generate tens of millions of dollars of revenue for the state. I feel it would be better for the state to keep the equine industry alive and well by passing this legislation than to cause an economic hardship that would certainly drive more horse owners out of the state and impact the related businesses that serve them (feed stores, tack shops, veterinarians, etc.).

Respectfully Submitted,
Frederick J. Mastele